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RAILROADS IN THE SOUTH.

Railroad discussion and railroad legislation have not kept the transportation problems of the South from receiving careful attention. Business men who are concerned with conditions all over the United States have followed with much interest the speeches of both public officials and railroad officials in the South.

The recent address in Cincinnati of Mr. Hoke Smith, Governor-elect of Georgia, is taken as an example of the most radical view, which urges a general reduction of rates. It has been noted that the speech of President Finley, of the Southern Railway, delivered before the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce three days after the Governor-elect spoke in Cincinnati, reads like an answer to many of Mr. Smith's statements, though it could hardly have been prepared as such.

The opinion of those who have given study to the question is that what the South needs most is improved facilities, better service, and not lower rates. Industrial expansion has been and continues to be so great that the difficult task before the common carriers is to provide means to carry the products of both farm and factory to market.

"The South cannot have both lower rates and better service," said President Finley in Atlanta.

"Choice must be made between the two, and I am sure that the intelligent business men of this section will agree with me that improved facilities are more urgently needed than any reduction in charges."

There was a time when early fruits and vegetables could not be obtained in the North except at very high prices. Now, owing to the establishment of through railroad service, oranges from Florida and berries and peaches from the other Southern States have come to be regarded almost as necessities. Fruits and vegetables from the South used to be consigned direct to New York or Philadelphia, and dealers in other places had to pay extra freight or express charges. Now all towns within a radius of 50 or 100 miles of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh or Buffalo have the rates that apply to the larger cities. Thus the Southern farmer is vitally affected by improvements in transportation.

Considerable as the improvement has been in the past, however, the remarkable growth of manufactures and the increase in the output of farms due to modern methods of agriculture are making the task of the railroads greater and greater. The necessity of providing better facilities grows with every month.

President Finley advocated government regulation of railroads "so far as such regulation is necessary to assure equality of treatment and prevent unreasonable or exorbitant charges."

"I have unbounded faith," he said, "not only in the fairness of the Southern people, but also in their ability to realize that when once they understand the interdependence of the railroads and of the people served by them they will be as reluctant to place any unnecessary obstacle in the way of railway improvements as they would be to oppose the improvements of

Southern waterways. . . . Transportation is necessary to complete production, and efficient and prompt transportation is as essential to the farmer as fertile fields and to the manufacturer as an efficient plant." Many keen men of affairs, who see far ahead, think that today the South presents the most attractive field for investors. So independent is prosperity upon transportation facilities, though, that the success of any venture may hinge upon the encouragement given to railroad improvements. If railroads are to be built and improved, money will be necessary. The ability to get money depends upon a railroad's credit, its credit depends upon its income, and its income depends principally upon the charges made for transportation.

DIVORCE BY WHOLESALE.

While all the readers of the daily press are painfully aware of the fact that a very large number of divorces are being asked for and granted, the announcement by the census office that a suit is filed every two minutes during court hours and a decree allowed every three minutes is startling information. According to the figures compiled by the census office, this has been the average for the past 20 years. Further than this, the average is now increasing at an alarming rate.

And the most surprising fact so far disclosed is that, contrary to the general belief, the largest percentage of increase in divorce is in rural communities. Discussing this phase of the matter an official of the census office said:

"The astonishing thing developed by the investigation now being made by the census bureau is that the greatest increase in divorce is in the rural districts. I do not mean by this that the rural districts furnish the most divorce cases. The cities still do that. But the increase in cities for the last 20-year period over the period from 1867 to 1887 is not as large as the increase in the rural districts. We are now trying to find out the cause of the increase, both in city and country."

This is indeed surprising intelligence and will furnish much food for reflection.

Taking the country as a whole for the 20-year period from 1867 to 1887 there were only 328,000 divorce suits filed in this country. For the 20-year period from 1887 to 1907 the number aggregates 1,400,000, or four times the number for the first period. However, the population also increased somewhat. Experts figure it that for the 20-year period prior to 1887, there were 33 divorce cases for every 100,000 inhabitants, while for the 20-year period from 1887 to 1907, there were 70 divorces for every 100,000 population. Decrees are issued in about two-thirds of the suits filed.

The census bureau has 100 agents in the field now gathering divorce statistics. It is now getting details, such as the cause of the proceedings, whether husband or wife filed suit, whether suit was contested, number of years parties were married, number of children, whether alimony was paid, and if intemperance was either the direct or indirect cause.

HIGHER TELEGRAPH TALK.

Officials of the two principal companies which practically control all the telegraph business of the country are prompt to declare that the sudden and unexpected advance in their rates, announced last week, were made independently of each other, but the press and public are hardly convinced that such is the case. In fact, the uniformity of the advances in tolls, amounting from 250 per cent to 40 per cent in most cases—such as to negative the idea that the schedules which either company was about to adopt were not known to the competing concern. However this may be, there has been not a little adverse comment, not only upon the secrecy which was observed in making the change, but with regard to the extent of the advances themselves.

There is, of course, a great deal of truth in the assertion made on behalf of the telegraph companies, to the effect that the increased cost of labor, materials of all kinds, etc., has rendered the tolls heretofore charged in a good many cases absolutely unprofitable, while it is a matter of common notoriety that the long-distance telephone service is being used to an increased extent for the transaction of business, to the detriment of the telegraph companies' earnings.

The recent reports of the Western Union would bear witness to this circumstance, and the same is in essentials true of the rival organization, the Postal Telegraph Company. To what extent the business community will protest against the increased cost of telegraph service is yet to be seen, but it is highly probable that not a little opposition will manifest itself. It might be observed that newspaper rates have been left unchanged at the old schedules.

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New York state is being flooded with 300,000 copies of the lone speech which Senator Dewey made at the last session. The good people of the Empire State will look in vain for any talk about resignations.

Nicaragua must have read about that man from Missouri and they want to be shown a reason why this country interfered in the bombardment of a Honduran town. Perhaps they will be told and again perhaps they will not.

A St. Louis woman who has been married for eight years and has never been kissed by her husband is suing for a divorce. We would rather not pronounce judgment till we have seen her.

A Cleveland judge had a man before him the other day who had not taken a bath in ten years and among the other sentences he received was to be scrubbed twice a day. It seems to us that the punishment was for the jailers.

It takes more than bad weather to make the hard workers for the Y. M. C. A. pause in their work. If the citizens of Newport News displayed the same spirit as the soliciting committees it would not take even fifteen days to raise the required amount.

The voters of Evanston, Ill., have elected an elderly single woman police justice. The confirmed bachelors of the city have every reason to take the matter seriously.

Next week will be the twelfth of the Thaw trial—and let us hope the last.

It might be just as well not to schedule the Richmond State college and William and Mary baseball game for the 26th.

WITH THE PARAGRAPHERS

Pat McCarren was in the mixed position of voting against the tingam bill while defending Mayor McClellan. McCareen is opposed to Tammany on "principle," but his interest in the police force is the same as Tammany's.—Buffalo Express.

The real reason that the President did not send "Jimmie" Hyde as ambassador to Paris was that he feared that France would retaliate with Boni de Castellane.—Charleston News-Courier.

Chicago seems to have been able to discriminate very clearly between a theory and a condition.—New York Tribune.

Even the severest critics of Richard Mansfield's peculiarities cannot but join in the hope that his breakdown will not prove permanent, and that he may learn in his hours of enforced retirement that there is a limit to the endurance of the human intellect and the human frame.—Minneapolis Tribune.

Some consolation remains in the fact that the destruction of the fruit crop has never yet caused an entire lack of fruit.—Washington Star.

A Trenton man, arrested as a house-breaker, declared he was "only running for exercise." So are about two dozen early aspirants for the Presidency.—New York Evening Post.

The lateness of spring elsewhere has its advantages for some people. For instance, there's that Russian admiral who is still alive because the bomb fell in the snow.—Indianapolis News.

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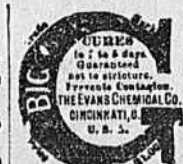
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